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International ministry changing lives

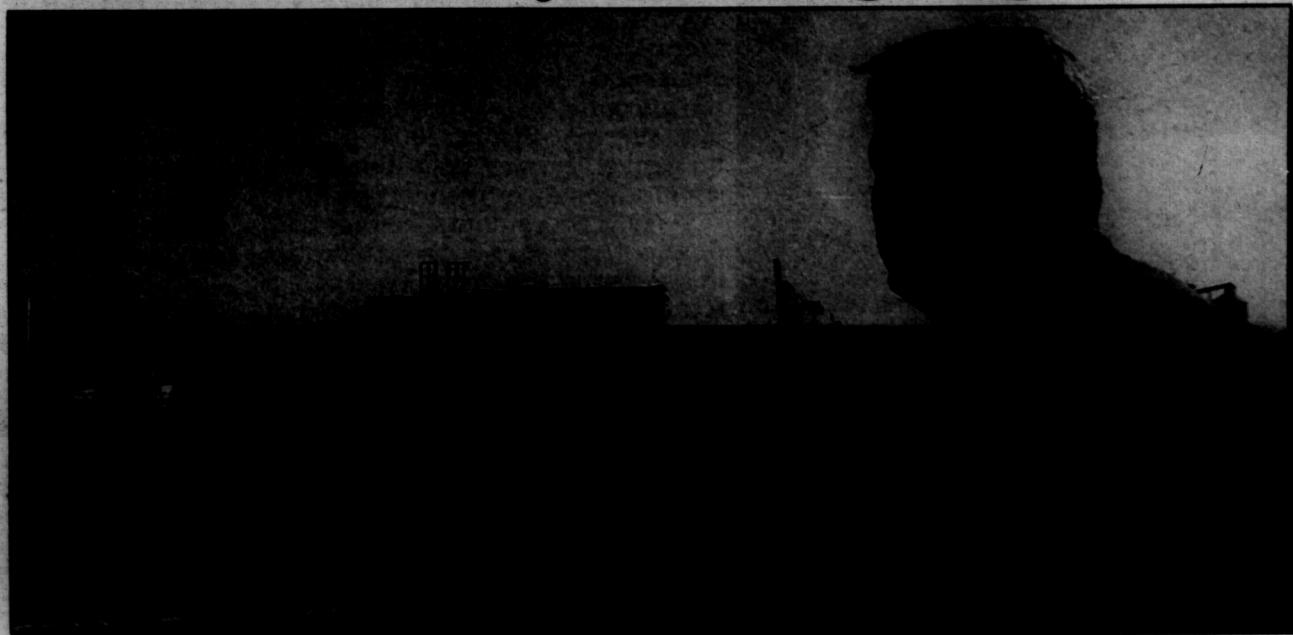
By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

While most people think of foreign missions as a ministry on the far side of the earth, it's possible to be involved in foreign missions without ever crossing the Mississippi state line.

At the Mississippi State Port in Gulfport, the world literally comes to Mississippi shores — and the Center for International Seamen and Truckers is poised to meet the needs of those international visitors.

Charles S. Corey, Jr., director of the Seamen's Center, provided a Christmas party and meal December 8 for volunteer workers and others at the center. The ministry's building perches high above sea level on piers, and is located within the gates of the Mississippi State Port. During the party, the packed facility hosted many local volunteers and dignitaries, including the mayor of Gulfport.

The Mississippi State Port is the third-largest seaport on the Gulf Coast, behind Houston and New Orleans. In the previous 12-month period, the port



ON THE BRIDGE — Charles Corey, Jr., director of the Center for International Seamen and Truckers in Gulfport, surveys the harbor from the bridge of the Dole Honduras, a ship of Italian registry. The ship was carrying 491 "reefer" containers this particular day. The Center for International Seamen and Truckers is supported by Gulf Coast Association churches and the Church Planting Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

keep the doors open here. There are so many men off the ships who need things. We take them shopping, to church, and we'll provide phone cards.

"We've been involved here for about eight years. When I retired in '91, my wife and I decided that we wanted to visit all the places we'd been. We had heard about the Seamen's Center, and came by and met Charles. We were able to set up a date and come back and work. Every time we're down here there's something different going on. The mission grows."

Several area churches are on a rotating schedule to ensure the Center is properly staffed. Bobby Hammond, a member of

New Hope Church, Gulfport, is a member of the Center's board of directors and a volunteer.

"We minister to both sailors and truckers," said Hammond. "We're able to provide tracts for them, make phone calls for them for the truckers, we can provide showers. The sailors come up to the Center for fellowship and to play pool, but shopping is the big deal for them."

"Our church provides volunteers on the first and third Friday nights," Hammond stated. "We drive the van to take them where they need to go."

One unique and powerful ministry the Center provides is distribution of the Jesus film. Lyn Oerting of Gulfport is significantly involved in this project.

"When there are seamen who don't have a visa and are not allowed to come off their ship, we'll go on board to show the Jesus film in their language," said Oerting. "We love all the groups we minister to, but the Chinese are special because they've never heard the Gospel."

"We call various prayer groups to pray for us," Oerting said. "Usually, we try to get on board the ships on Wednesdays or Sundays, and that way it's easier to get a group together in a church to pray for us as we go onboard the ships. There are six of us who usually go together. We take the video in their language on board, and we'll provide soda, chips, dip, and cookies. We also provide little gift packets — we get businessmen to bring home the little soaps and shampoos they get in hotel rooms, and make up packets with those and other toiletries."

"After we show the video, we use the Gideon plan of salvation," Oerting continued. "We've found that it's simple and short. We hand out photocopies of the outline, especially if there's a language issue. We also give out New Testaments."

"Those who get saved want to take a copy of the video home," Oerting stated, smiling. "Of course, we try to provide that for them."

"If the seamen can get off the ship, then we give the video to the captain," she said. "A lot of times, they'll find themselves out in the middle of the Atlantic, bored, and will watch it. So we pray for good attendance, and just trust that the Holy Spirit will touch their lives."

Other churches have ministered by providing items such as polarized sunglasses and stocking caps. "The hold on the Russian ships is freezing," Oerting said, "and the sailors appreciate the stocking caps. We've also found that they really appreciate used wheelchairs. We've gotten many letters and testimonies of just how meaningful a wheelchair can be."

By the end of November, the Center for International Seamen and Truckers had hosted 1049 seafarers at their facility, year to date. Transportation was provided for 3356 seamen, and 442 truckers had visited. Significantly, 107 Jesus videos were distributed, along with 635 Bibles. Forty-one countries were represented, and 165 spiritual experiences were recorded.

The Center for International Seamen and Truckers is supported by Gulf Coast Association and the Church Planting Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. For more information on the ministry of the Center, contact Corey, Jr., at (228) 868-2525. E-mail: ccoreyjr@cs.com.



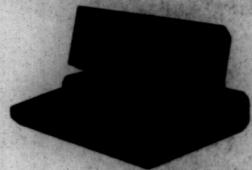
IN PORT — Captain Ivan Larson (left) and mate Cornelio Garcia, of the ship Mar Caribe Majuro, are typical of the seamen who receive ministry from the Center for International Seamen and Truckers in Gulfport. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

serviced 380 ships from across the world, unloading commodities from bananas to a white pigment used in both house paint and snack foods. Ships leaving the port carry such items as chickens and cattle, with some items even going to Cuba.

With such international traffic, ministry opportunities are numerous. Dewitt Craft of Liberty is a typical volunteer.

"We're involved with Campers on Mission," said Craft. "We pull our camper down and park it here by the building, and when Charles is out of town, we

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Remember the martyrs, always

The year 2003 brought many great advances in the quest to fulfill our Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). Opportunities that existed only in dreams a few years ago all of a sudden became reality.

Doors opened that had been closed for decades. The eyes, ears, and hearts of so many people were tuned to hear and understand the Gospel message, that it seemed the whole world was yearning to know. More Mississippi Baptists than ever went to more places to witness to more people than anyone could have imagined, and the missions tempo is quickening as we look forward to 2004.

Before we direct our prayers and our resources to the future and its enormous potential, however, we should take a moment to give God the glory for the victories gained in His service during 2003 — and remember the martyrs. Always, we should remember the martyrs.

A few short hours before 2003 dawned, three Southern Baptist missionaries lost their lives and a fourth missionary was wounded at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Surgeon Martha Myers, hospital administrator Bill Koehn, and supply manager Kathleen Gariety were murdered by a Muslim extremist as they went about their normal hospital duties. Pharmacist Don Caswell was critically wounded but has recovered and returned to the mission field.

In the 12 months that have transpired since the shootings, the hospital has been transferred from the International Mission Board to a local Yemeni charity and the gunman has been sentenced to death by a Yemeni court. The hospital is operating normally, but the missionaries who were martyred there should never be forgotten.

Judy Williams, a surgeon at the Jibla hospital, told international reporters covering the shootings, "These individuals deeply loved and cared for the people of Yemen. They freely chose to serve the people of this country, and although their lives

on earth have ended, nothing was taken from them that they hadn't already freely given."

While Southern Baptists were still reeling from the Jibla tragedy, missionary William P. "Bill" Hyde was killed and another missionary and her two children seriously injured when a terrorist bomb exploded at the airport at Davao City in Philippines.

Hyde was at the airport to pick up the Stevens family, Southern Baptist missionaries who were returning from a short vacation. Barbara Stevens was injured in the blast, as were her daughter Sarah, age four, and son Nathan, 10 months old. Husband and father Mark Stevens was not injured.

At least 20 other people were killed and 144 more people injured by the bomb, which detonated inside a bus shelter crowded with people trying to escape a downpour. The crime has not been solved and no suspects were ever arrested.

Family friend Ed Gregory, missions team leader for the Baptist Convention of Iowa, described Bill Hyde as a spirited missionary who "kept retraining, fulfilling different roles, teaching, church planting. He was constantly developing Filipino pastors, helping them get new work started, and then mentoring them in their roles."

The loss of these four great men and women has been a blow to all of us, but we must press onward toward the prize.

During this war against terrorism in the midst of which we currently find ourselves, national political leaders are quick to remind us that the battle will be long and hard-fought, that those who fall in battle will be many, and that the cause will ultimately be worth the steep price we are now paying.



Gariety



Koehn



Myers



Caswell



Hyde

The same can be said of the spiritual warfare that rages all around us. The battle that Christians have been fighting for 2,000 years has also been long and hard-fought, and the casualties have been high. However, we already know the great victory is ours.

May we walk boldly in the big footprints left by the martyrs, and may we lift high the banner for which they died. Their blood demands no less from us, the people privileged to be called by the name Christian.

The staff of The Baptist Record prays for you and your loved ones a most joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and wishes for each of you a happy new year. We thank you for your support and look forward to serving you in 2004.

Southern Baptist missionaries give lives on field

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Southern Baptist workers, by the very nature of their daily life and ministry in communities throughout the world, have always lived with a measure of danger during the 158-year history of the Foreign Mission Board and its successor, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Remarkably, however, only 21 workers among the many thousands sent out have been killed on the mission field in violent circumstances since 1845. They are:

- March 4, 2003 — Bill Hyde, working in Philippines. Killed by a terrorist bomb planted at Davao City Airport.

- December 30, 2002 — Bill Koehn, Martha Myers, and Kathy Gariety, working at Jibla Baptist Hospital in Jibla, Yemen. Murdered by a Muslim extremist.

- April 21, 1998 — Charles W. Hood Jr., working in Colombia, South America. Shot to death in his front yard by robbers.

- March 23, 1995 — Chu Hon and Kei Yi, Khabarovsk, working in Russia. Murdered in their locked apartment.

- March 27, 1991 — Lynda Bethea, working in Kenya. Beaten to death by highway robbers near Kijabe, Kenya. Her husband Larry was also brutally beaten but survived.

- October 2, 1990 — Mary Anna Gilbert, working in China. Killed in crash of hijacked Chinese jetliner in Guangzhou, China (teacher with Cooperative Services International).

- November 26, 1986 — Libby Senter, working in Liberia. Murdered along with her daughter Rachel.

- October 11, 1985 — James Philpot, working in Mexico. Shot dead during an altercation after a minor automobile accident.

- June 15, 1978 — Archie G. Dunaway Jr., working in Rhodesia. Killed by guerrillas seeking an African-majority

- government in the white-ruled, former British colony.

- March 11, 1973 — Gladys Hopewell, working in Taiwan. No details of her murder were available.

- January 16, 1972 — Mavis Pate, working in the Gaza area of the Middle East. Shot by Arab guerrillas in ambush as she drove near a refugee camp.

- July 7, 1971 — Paul E. and Nancy Potter, working in the Dominican Republic. No details of their murders were available.

- February 10, 1951 — William L. Wallace, working in China, died in communist prison. Many people familiar with Wallace's case believe the physician was tortured to death by the Communist Chinese.

- January 1942 — Rufas F. Gray, working in China. Died in Japanese camp for war prisoners in Baguio, Philippines.

- December 1880 — John Westrup, working in Mexico. Murdered by band of 20 Indians and Mexicans while traveling from Santa Rosa to Monterey.

- October 1, 1861 — J. Landrum Holmes, working in China. Murdered while attempting to dissuade invaders from attacking the village of Chu Kia on Shantung Peninsula during the Taiping Rebellion.

Additionally, 40 Southern Baptist workers have been killed in accidents during the history of IMB and FMB, and many more workers have been victims of kidnappings, assaults, carjackings, and other major crimes. A total of 18 deaths — including 12 in China — were reported prior to 1937 but without a listed cause of death.

Source: International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Richmond, Va.

Theological giant Carl F. H. Henry, 90, dies

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Carl F.H. Henry, a staunch defender of biblical authority, a giant evangelical theologian of the 20th century, and the founding editor of Christianity Today, died Dec. 7. He was 90 years of age.

Known as the dean of evangelical theologians by some, Henry helped shape evangelical thought during the middle of the 20th century by arguing that fundamentalism and its belief in separation from culture was ineffective. Evangelicals, he asserted, must engage the culture.

In the later half of the century Henry defended the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, asserting that heresy is rooted in an improper understanding of God's revelation. His six-volume God, Revelation and Authority, released from 1976-82, served as a monumental guide to the centrality of the doctrine of revelation.

Henry, a member of Capitol Hill Church in Washington, D.C., died in his sleep in Watertown, Wis.

"The mission of the church is to embrace both evangelism and cultural impact," he said in a 2001 interview with Southern Seminary Magazine. "To neglect either is catastrophic. This is the lesson of both Protestant liberalism and fundamentalism."

David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., said Henry's death leaves "a huge void" in American Christianity. "No Christian thinker in this country has done more to advance orthodox theology and full-orbed Christian worldview thinking than Carl F.H. Henry," Dockery said. "Evangelicals across this country and the entire world stand in debt to Dr. Henry for his years of service and leadership across the evangelical world."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said Henry's death presents a challenge to the next generation of evangelicals. "The

torch has now been passed to a new generation," Mohler wrote on his Crosswalk.com weblog. "The real question is now this: Will the present generation of evangelicals run the race — or run from the challenge?"

Morris H. Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, noted Henry's influence in the struggle over biblical authority. "Dr. Henry's influence as a Christian thinker and gentleman not only had a most profound impact upon the shape of evangelicalism, many view him as the champion in the battle for the Bible," Chapman said. "His exemplary scholarship, tenacious devotion and gracious spirit have left an indelible impression upon the Christian community."

Born Jan. 22, 1913, to immigrant parents in New York City, Henry grew up under a Roman Catholic mother and a Lutheran father but in 1933 — "by the grace" of God he would write later — he was saved at the age of 20.

"That very day, had the risen Redeemer commanded, I would have gone to China or to any of the uttermost parts," he wrote in 1958.

Instead, Henry felt a calling

to attend Wheaton College, where he became friends with classmates Billy Graham and Harold Lindsell (author of The Battle for the Bible).

Henry earned bachelor and master of arts degrees at Wheaton and bachelor of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill. He later received a Ph.D. at Boston University.

He met his wife Helga Bender at Wheaton. They were married in 1940 and later had two children.

Henry went into teaching, serving first at Northern Seminary and later at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. While at Northern Seminary, Henry wrote The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism in which he critiqued the fundamentalism of the day and argued that evangelicalism must engage the culture intellectually.

In 1956, Henry became the first editor of Christianity Today, which was the brainchild of Graham and was started as an evangelical alternative to the more liberal Christian Century. Henry left Christianity Today in 1968 and went to Cambridge, England, to study, but later returned to the United States to teach at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Henry considered himself a Baptist for the last 50-plus years of his life. In 1958, he wrote an article titled, Twenty Years a Baptist — an article that was later included in the 2001 book, Why I Am A Baptist.

Henry spoke at the 1987 SBC Pastors' Conference and in 1994 was given the title by Southern Seminary of senior research professor of Christian theology. In 1988 he gave the address at Richard Land's installation as head of the (SBC) Christian Life

Commission (now Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission) and in 1993 he spoke at Southern Seminary during events surrounding Mohler's inauguration. He last visited Southern Seminary in 1999.

During the 2001 interview with Southern Seminary Magazine, Henry praised the movement by Southern Baptists to return to their orthodox biblical roots. "The collapse of modernism and the reassertion of a commitment to biblical authority within the denomination are significant," he said. "It means that God has provided a new opportunity for evangelical renewal within the denomination and beyond."

Henry lamented the drift toward modernism and liberalism within many Baptist institutions.



Henry



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

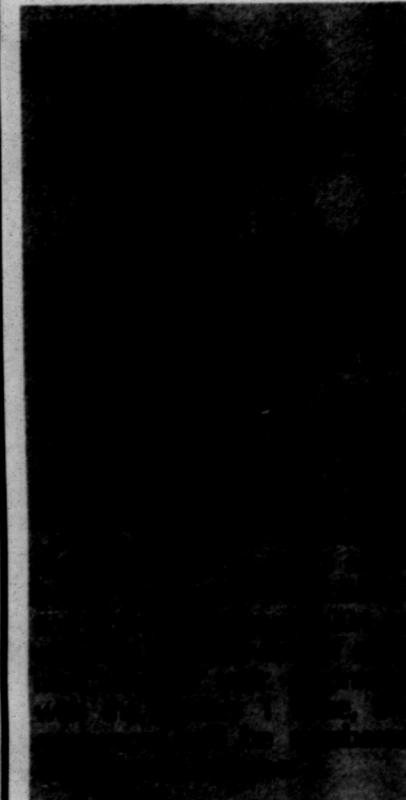
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Looking back

10 years ago

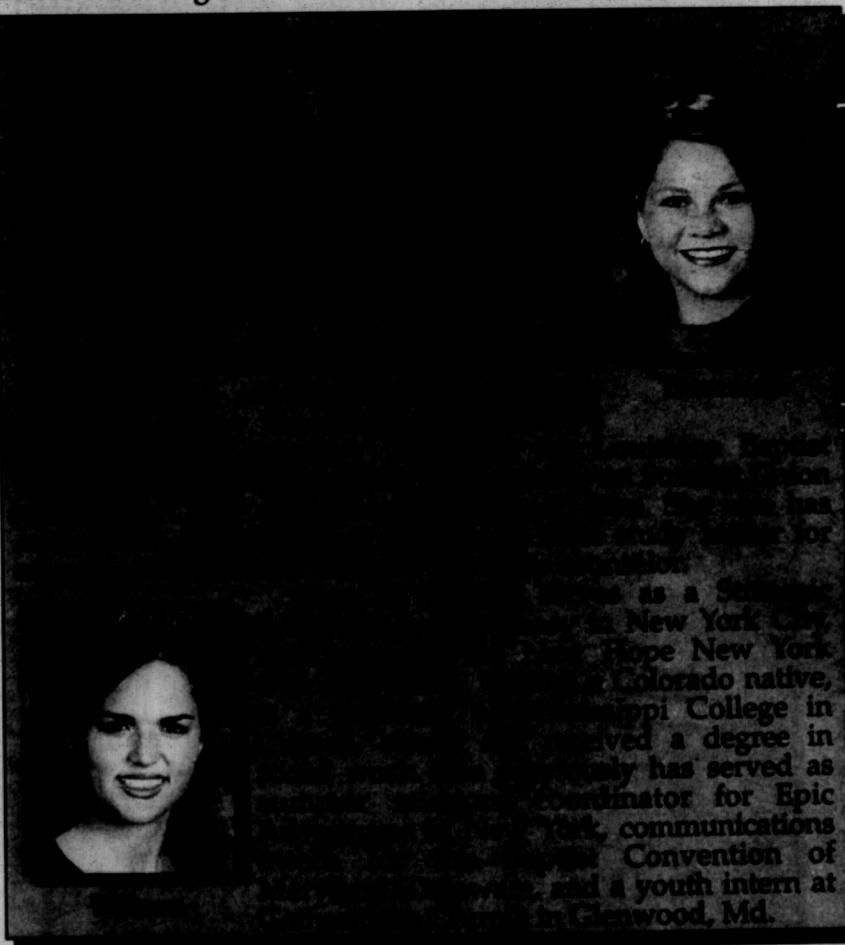
The Baptist Hymnal, first released in 1991 for use in churches, is unveiled with a new title and supplementary materials for use in family worship. The Baptist Hymnal for Home & Family was edited by Wesley Forbis, director of the Sunday School Board's Music Ministries Department.

20 years ago

North Winona Church, under the leadership of Frank Bishop adds an additional 75 international flags to the 42 flags already owned by the church. The church has undertaken a project to make a flag for every nation where Southern Baptists have a missionary.

50 years ago

First Church, Pontotoc, dedicates its new \$60,000 education annex, with Chester Quarles, executive secretary of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, serving as guest speaker. Located on a lot just south of the existing church, the new three story building "is modern in every detail."



JUST FOR THE RECORD

The adult choir of Mt. Carmel Church, Edinburg, will present their Christmas Cantata, Bethlehem's Child, on December 21 at 11 a.m. All are welcome. For more information, call (601) 267-5717 between 8:30 and 11:30 a.m. Keith Fulton is pastor.

First Church, Terry, exceeded their goal of \$2,000 for the Margaret Lackey Offering to support State Missions by giving a total of \$2,238.50. John H. Pace, Jr. is pastor.

Steve Walker, music evangelist from Pinola, will be featured in a special Christmas concert December 21 at 6 p.m. at Fellowship Church, Mendenhall. Admission is free, but a love offering will be received. Donald Green is pastor. For more information, call (601) 849-3324 or (601) 847-4375.

Michael J. Winstead was recently ordained to the ministry by Springfield Church, Morton. Winstead is a graduate of Mississippi State University in Starkville and Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth. He currently serves as minister to students at First Church, Richland. Pictured (from left) are Springfield Church deacon - Danny Wade and Winstead. Frank Lay is pastor.



D. Wade, Springfield church deacon, and M. Winstead

ORGANIST, CASTLEWOODS Baptist Church. Send a letter of interest or resume to 175 Stonecastle Drive, Brandon, MS 39047 via mail or fax. Fax (601) 992-2623. For information call (601) 992-9977.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH in Meridian, Miss., is seeking a full-time Associate pastor of youth and education. Please send resumes or letters of interest to New Hope Baptist Church, attention search committee, 6573 Highway 145 South, Meridian, MS 39301.

SEEKING PART-TIME CHURCH SECRETARIAL position in the Jackson, Miss. area. Contact Chasity Martin (601) 926-4618.

DERMA BAPTIST CHURCH, DERMA, Miss., searching for part-time bi-vocational adult choir director. If interested in this position, please send resume to Derma Baptist Church, P.O. Box 67, Derma, MS 38839. If you have any other questions about this position, call the church office at (662) 628-5595, Monday - Friday between 8 am and 5 pm.

Mississippi College (MC) December commencement exercises are set for December 19 at 7 p.m. in A. E. Wood Coliseum, Mississippi College campus. Approximately 185 students will receive degrees.

Degrees will be conferred by Lee G. Royce, president. The address will be delivered by Edward Valente, professor of Chemistry. Valente was named the 2002-2003 Distinguished Professor of the Year.

The Board of Ministerial Education of the MBCB awarded the William Clawson Scholarship to William Carey College student Logan Abbott, Townsend, Tenn. Abbott is a religion major and biblical language minor at William Carey College (WCC). Established by the Board to honor William Clawson

for his years of exemplary service in the school of religion at WCC, this scholarship is awarded to a deserving religion student. Pictured (from left) are Abbott, Daniel Caldwell, dean of the Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies at Carey, and a member of the Board of Ministerial Education.

will be used to support the MC Speech and Debate Team's expenses as they represent MC in Forensic competitions throughout the Central Southern region. Pictured (from left) are Lee Royce, president, Golding, and Web Drake, Department of Communications.



Abbott and Caldwell



Royce, Golding, and Drake

COLLEGE AND SEMINARY NEWS

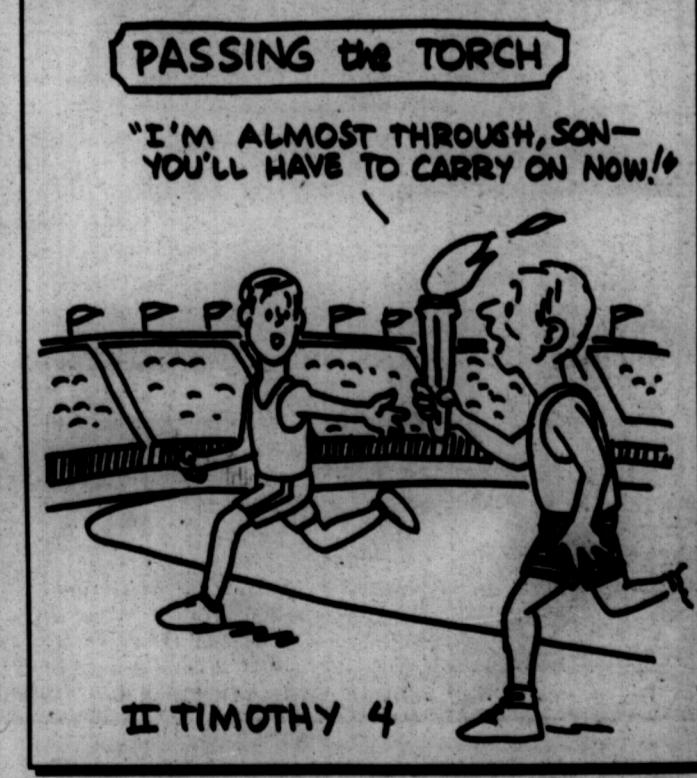
McKeever offers cartoons for January Bible Study

Joe McKeever, pastor of First Church in Kenner, La., and a former Mississippi Baptist pastor and church staffer, has released his annual January Bible Study cartoons to complement this year's

study of I and II Timothy. McKeever, who draws editorial cartoons for state Baptist newspapers, is syndicated by Baptist Press in Nashville. There is no charge for the January Bible Study cartoons if

downloaded from www.fbckenner.org. The cartoons are also copyright-free. A two-dollar fee to cover the costs of printing and postage is required if the cartoons are ordered and mailed from First

Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1357, Kenner, LA 70063. For more information, contact McKeever at fbck1@compuserve.com, or call (504) 466-5381. Samples from the January Bible Study cartoon set are printed below.



UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

The focus of the world is once again on the birth of a baby. Not just "a" baby, but God's child, His Son, and our Savior! For centuries the prophets had told about His birth and now, for centuries, you and I have celebrated that birth. The infinite God stepping down into the finite existence of our world clothed as a little child. What a blessing! What a marvel! Oh what grace that God would intentionally send down His lovely, innocent Son in order to bear our sins.

It is inconceivable that any of us would have ever thought about carrying out "Redemptions" work in this fashion. It goes against our warped thought process. It moves contrary to our aversion to pain and burden to think that God would give up His boy and release Him to come to earth to live His life perfectly so that He could die for all of our imperfections. But, that is exactly what happened and that is why we celebrate. Jesus has come to save us!

As with moms and dads through the centuries, when this baby was anticipated, they wondered what he should be named. But, early on the issue was settled because an angel appeared and said that His name had been chosen by Heaven and His name would be Jesus. Jesus, which literally means that "God saves!" Jesus, which would be a description of the very thing that He came here to do. Jesus, whose name would embody all of the hopes for the future. Oh, what a celebration!

Just before Christmas 2003, our family, too, was expecting a new arrival. The approximate date was known and the preparations for his coming had been made and we had been told that the baby was going to be a boy. Then, only days before Christmas, the blessing arrived. There were no shepherds nor wise men, just mom



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

and dad (Melodi and Tim) and big sister Madi, along with a host of grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends were on hand to welcome his arrival. So it was, for us, as God designed it to be - a wonderful, special event where "Unto us a child was born."

Now, the question of the ages awaited an answer — "and his name shall be called..." Standing in the doorway of the delivery room the father, holding his young son, announced and introduced "Hilton Banks McNair." Scripture is always accurate and insightful, and when it says that a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, it is right on target! This new little baby is named for two significant men in his life that he will not meet but will certainly come to know. "Hilton" was his mother's great-uncle and "Banks" was his dad's grandfather. Both of them were hard-working, good men that were involved in church and community life, and deeply cared for their families.

Now, this little fellow is going to be called "Banks." I suppose that if you looked that word up in the dictionary you would find a definition related to financial institutions or, if used in a different way, it would describe the sides of a river. I guess for some NASCAR folks it would describe the slope of a track as the cars go into a turn. But, in this case, it describes a 6 lb. 13 oz. little boy!

Let's let his name describe him. The "B" stands for **beautiful**. As in the case of most of us, the grandkids, and maybe the kids, are beautiful and in Banks' case, he certainly is. As

a matter of fact, he is so handsome that I stopped by and picked him up a little camouflage outfit with hat included, so that he would look the part of a rugged hunter.

Isn't it amazing how God can take just two eyes, two ears, a nose, little mouth and chin, and package them together so beautifully! Over and over, through the years, He has done it and He has done it again in His own unique way.

The "A" stands for **athletic**. It was amazing as this little boy was hardly over an hour old and he was pushing up! Before we ever saw him, you could hear his powerful lungs from the room where he was born. I know that he is still in the fledgling form, but you can already tell just by the way he handles himself and the way he moves that he is going to have a lot of athletic ability.

The "N" stands for **intellectual**. Now, I certainly understand that many of you probably spell intellectual with an "I". I've never really understood that when it just sounds like "N-tellectual!" But, in this case, it's an unusual kind of "N-tellect." Already, you can tell how bright he is. You can call his name and he looks around. He is making some sounds that already have definite overtones of brilliance. But, my prayer and my desire for him is that he will have that unusual kind of vital intellect in that he will know our Lord. Sure, it will be important for him to learn to read, to write, and to understand and communicate with the world

around him, but all of that would be meaningless if he did not know the Lord.

What does God have in store for this little package of life? Will he be a preacher, a salesman, a doctor, or a teacher? I do not know, but what I do know is that God has a plan for his life and I want, more than anything, for him to know that plan and to know that God who has made him.

The "K" stands for **kept**. While there are children in this world that no one cares for and there are even hundreds of thousands of children who are disposed of before they can ever see the light of day, this little boy, Banks, is blessed to be a part of a family where he will be kept, encouraged, and provided for in mind, soul, body, and spirit. Already there are dozens of folks who are helping to keep him, but there will be many others in the days ahead that will keep him pointed in the right direction and will keep him from crossing over the lines where there is danger and hurt.

The "S" stands for **steward**. That is what he must be — a good steward. For only a few days ago he came to live with us here in this capsule of time called life and there will be decisions by the dozens, by the hundreds, and even by the thousands that he will have to make in his lifetime. Who knows how many decisions he will have to make that will shape who he is, what he will become, and how he will bless those around him.

When he arrived, all the folks gathered around the window and were peering at him. Some said that he looked like this one or that one, his mom, his dad, his sister, and even his uncle. But, in reality, he looked like "Banks" and we pray that God will bless, keep, and use him!

This Christmas, as we give thanks for our living Lord, we are also grateful that "unto us a child is born."

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TRB Z SRFM IPTI IPJK

PFTLFWI CF THMTXW:

GKI GFATKWF JD IPF

OFJOHF MPZAP WITRB

GX Z WTZB ZI, IPTI IPFX

CTX GFHZNF IPTI IPJK

PTWI WFRI CF.

QJPR FHFNFR: DJLIX-IMI

Clue: D = F

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 12:32

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

What Child is This

Luke 2:4-7; 27-28

By Ken Anderson

It's that rambling, shuffling, and scrambling time of the year. People are busy with their self-imposed hectic schedules for Christmas. The first Christmas was a busy time also. People were scrambling to find lodging and provisions in Bethlehem. Yet in the hurry and scurry of it all a child was born. It was the greatest and most glorious birth in human history, the birth of Jesus Christ.

BETHLEHEM (2:4-7):

Luke's account of Christ's birth was written against the backdrop of history (v. 4). The birth of Christ was not a fable; it happened in real time and under the sovereignty of God.

Caesar Augustus allowed the Jews to register at their ancestral homes. David returned to his

family home of Bethlehem, the city of David (v. 4). Herschel Hobbs noted that the "Biblical record implies that Mary was also of the lineage of David; since Joseph was not Jesus' real father, he could only be the son of God through Mary." Mary was espoused to Joseph meaning that they were married but not in the fullest sense. They did not consummate their marriage until after Jesus' birth (v. 5).

The approximate 80 to 90-mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem was difficult. Yet it placed the couple in the city the prophet Micah declared would be the birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2).

Doctor Luke recorded that Mary experienced a full term pregnancy and delivered Christ in



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the normal manner of childbirth. The miracle of the virgin mother was her conception through the action of the Holy Spirit (read Luke 1:34-35).

JERUSALEM (2:27-28):

After Christ's circumcision and Mary's period of ceremonial uncleanness, Mary and Joseph made the five mile trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. There in the Temple they fulfilled the Mosaic laws (v. 27) of purification and redemption of their firstborn child.

To authenticate Christ's birth Luke recorded two testimonies. First was Simeon, a "just" and "devout" man. This means he conformed his life to God's standards and lived carefully in the presence of God (v. 25). He lived expectantly and confidently that the Messiah ("Consolation of Israel") would come before his death (v. 25b). The Holy Spirit led this devout man to the Temple to worship, as was his custom (v. 27). There he cradled the child in his arms and recognized Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. At that

point he began to praise ("Bless") God in a song (vs. 29-32). He called himself a "servant" (a slave or bondservant) and asked to depart (to leave or to die).

Simeon saw more than a baby; he saw God's answer to people's sin problem. He saw God's universal salvation (vs. 30-32).

Simeon foresaw the hostility Jesus would provoke and the suffering Mary would endure. People would either accept or reject Him (v. 34a). Their response to Him would reveal the content of their hearts (v. 34b & 35b). Mary would suffer also, but her suffering would not atone for sin (v. 35). The harsh response of people to her son would bring her the deepest of sorrows.

The second testimony was of an elder prophetess who was widowed for seven years. Similar to Simeon, she was devoted and dedicated to God. She was, so to speak, at the Temple every time the doors were opened (v. 37). After recognizing Christ as the Messiah, she continually spoke to those in Jerusalem who were waiting for the redemption of Israel (v. 38).

INSIGHTS FROM THE TEXT:

No Room: Luke does not give the motives that turn Mary and Joseph away from the inn. The innkeeper may have done the best he could under the circumstances, but it presents a moral truth about the human heart. Many turn Christ away from a permanent place in their hearts. Yet, when Christ is received there is no room for anything opposite of his permanent place as Lord.

Waiting: It is not the American way to wait. In our fast-food culture there is not a moment to lose, but there are some things that take time and plenty of it. The phrase "wait upon the Lord" is found forty-three times in the Old Testament. There are times to wait while relying on God's faithfulness.

The Face of All People: Simeon foresaw that Christ's salvation would encompass all people. Mississippi Baptists have missions as its heart. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions is one effective way to carry the Great Commission to the "face of all people."

Anderson is pastor of First Church, Saltillo.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Rejoicing in the Savior's Birth

Matthew 1:1-2, 16-25

By Ann Maniscalco

The question everyone hears this time of year — "Are you ready for Christmas?" — is an unsettling one for me. As I struggle amidst December's hustle and bustle to focus on the tiny Babe who gives Christmas its true meaning, I wonder if the Lord — whose birth we are to celebrate — would say I was "ready for Christmas". Perhaps this is a good question to ask others — even fellow believers — to see if their preparation is properly focused. If we are attuned to the Spirit's quiet voice, this season can be one of great witnessing opportunities! Pause and ask God to make you aware of those He's prepared to hear the Gospel through you.

SIGNIFICANT GENEALOGY (MATT. 1:1-2, 16-17):

Matthew, one of the synoptic Gospel authors, wrote to prove



Maniscalco

that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, (the Greek word is "Christ"), a title meaning "the Anointed One." Genealogy was important to Matthew's Jewish readers, and he used this list to show Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy. By calling Him "the son of David" (vs. 1), Matthew looked back to 2 Samuel 7:16, where God promised David that his "throne [would] be established forever" (See also Isaiah 11:1-5). Likewise, referring to Him as the "Son of Abraham" reminded readers of God's promise to the patriarch, that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through [him]" (Genesis 12:3).

Although the focal passage omits verses 3-15, take a few moments to read the cross-section of Jesus genealogy. Down this timeline marched quite a procession of characters, repre-

senting a variety of lifestyles. Even the ones of whom we know a great deal had at least a few failures — some quite grievous — to their account. They all needed (as do we) a Savior, and He would come through this less-than-perfect family tree.

This ancestral procession is most likely a condensed version, divided into three important epochs of Israel's history (vs. 17). The last name mentioned in Jesus ancestral line is Joseph, Mary's husband (vs. 16). In Luke 3:31, Mary's genealogical line shows her to be a direct descendant of David as well.

DISTURBING SITUATION (MATT. 1:18-19):

Mary was "pledged to be married to Joseph" (vs. 18). In those times, this was more than being engaged. Today, we might consider it the brief time between a couple's wedding vows and their honeymoon. The couple was legally united, but had not physically consummated their relationship.

Luke 1:26-38 recounts the

story of the angel Gabriel's proclamation to Mary that she would bear God's Son. "At that time" (vs. 39) Mary went to visit her cousin Elizabeth and stayed about three months before returning home. This is probably when Joseph became aware of her pregnancy. It seemed Mary had been unfaithful, but because Joseph was a "righteous man", he didn't want to cause her "public disgrace" which might have resulted in her being stoned, so he planned to "divorce her quietly."

There are always those who would "cast stones" at people caught in sin's clutches. However, God's love is always redemptive, and wants us to put aside such judgmental attitudes and reach out to such persons.

DIVINE DIRECTION (MATT. 1:20-23):

Since Joseph was a "righteous man", he was in tune with God. An angel spoke to him in a dream, telling him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. The angel informed him of the holy Son that would be born to Mary, and that he was to name

the child Jesus, "because he will save his people from their sins" (vs. 21). The name "Jesus" means "the Lord saves", and His miraculous birth would fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, the coming of Immanuel — "God with us."

BLESSED BIRTH (MATT. 1:24-25):

Joseph was obedient to this heavenly vision. Did he have questions? I'm sure he did, just as Mary must have had when she accepted God's call to bear the Savior. However, their selfless obedience gave them the incredible opportunity to raise the Son of God!

When God calls us to a task, especially that of witnessing, we might be afraid. As Joseph, we may be pondering how to proceed, but just as the angel said to Joseph, "do not be afraid," God's Spirit can give us the same assurance of His presence to lead us.

"Are you ready for Christmas?" What better way to celebrate the CHRISTmas season than to share Jesus' love and the message of hope He brings!

Maniscalco is member of First Church, Ocean Springs.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Life in the Son

John 1:1-18

It was a delight to hear the children say, "we know our ABCs." It was not their school alphabet but the ABCs of Vacation Bible School. They would say "A" means admit that you are a sinner. "B" means to believe that Jesus is God's son and accept God's gift of forgiveness from sin. "C" means to confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then, what a joy to hear the tender hearts of a children pray to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior. It happens in many other places and among all ages. People find real life that only can be found in Jesus Christ. It can happen while the lesson is being taught.

The text is from what is known as the prologue of John's Gospel. John presents a magnificent portrait of Christ, the eternal Word.

CHRIST IS THE WORD (v. 1):
What did John intend his readers to understand by the use

of the words "the Word was God." The "Word" is a translation of the Greek word *logos*, which refers to a person and that person is Jesus Christ. To use Jesus in place of the "Word" and vice-versa has the same meaning. The "Word" is Jesus, the revelation of God in human flesh.

CHRIST IS ETERNAL (v.2):

Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was not the beginning of His existence. He was in the beginning with God. Read John 17:5. There was never a time when Christ did not exist with the Father. He is eternal and totally God.

CHRIST IS THE CREATOR (v. 3):

To place verse three parallel with the Genesis account of creation presents a glimpse of Christ's preincarnate existence and activity.



Anderson

Christ is the creator and sustainer of all that exists.

CHRIST IS THE LIGHT AND THE LIFE (vs.4, 5,9):

John used the physical terms life and light to communicate spiritual truths. While one's physical life is a reality with Christ as its source, so is the spiritual life.

Real life is more than the physical and material. Real life comes through Christ and Christ alone. Christ is the source of true authentic spiritual light. Fred Howard wrote, "Christ is the real Light in contrast to physical light that is actual light but is a best a weak imitation of the real thing." Read Matthew 5:14 and John 8:12. He enlightens all who will receive him as Lord and Savior. Of course there is an ongoing effort of darkness to extinguish the Light, but the light keeps on shining.

CHRIST MUST BE RECEIVED (vs. 10-13):

There are some who will receive the Light and some who

will reject the Light. John identified two areas where the Light was rejected. First is the world or the general mass of humanity. Second and specifically, the Jewish nation — Christ's own people. There is a remnant that will receive Him. Those who did receive him were given the right or privilege to become the children of God. Becoming a child of God does not reside with the power of human efforts or accomplishment. It is a gift He gave. He is the source of salvation.

CHRIST IS THE INCARNATE WORD (v.14):

The news of great joy the Shepherd's heard in Luke 2:10 was/is that the Word which was in the beginning and the creator and sustainer of all things "became flesh and dwelt (literally pitched his tent or tabernacled among us). John wrote that "we beheld is glory." The Greek word for glory is *doxa* and its Old Testament equivalent *Kabod* meant "weight" or "heaviness." It carries the idea of one's personal worth or character. Therefore,

Jesus is the perfect revelation of the character of God (L. Coleman).

It is amazing that God would become flesh and dwell with us full of grace, but even more so that one can receive from his fullness. Paul wrote that, "you may be filled with all the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 3:19).

INSIGHTS FROM THE TEXT:

"Giving light to all men" in verse 9 has been used as a proof text for the final and complete salvation of all being (universal salvation). Verses 10-13 reveal clearly that is not the case.

"John bore witness of him" (v.15) and so should all believers. Mississippi is known for being a part of the Bible belt. Here are some facts from the Bible belt: 47% of Mississippians claim no personal relationship with Christ and 57% of Mississippians are unchurched. In 2002 approximately 450 Mississippi Baptist churches reported no baptisms.

Anderson is pastor of First Church, Saltillo.

which could mean involvement with those of a different nationality.

However, God may also be tugging at your heart, saying as He did to Abraham, "Leave your country and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Whether or not you are called to leave your time zone, you will be called to leave your comfort zone! Young, middle-aged, and retired people are needed to be on mission with God, and there are hundreds of exciting ways you can serve (career or volunteer). Contact the International Mission Board at (800) 866-3621 or www.imb.org or the North American Mission Board at (800) 462-8657 or www.namb.net. Your associational director of missions can offer guidance for local possibilities as well.

Our Lord Jesus had an unquenchable passion for men's souls (Luke 4:16-19, Luke 19:10, John 4:34-35, John 7:37, John 12:32). Will you let His consuming love propel you into the waiting harvest?

Maniscalco is member of First Church, Ocean Springs.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Understanding God's Compassion

Jonah 4:1-11

By Ann Maniscalco

Do you have some favorite Scriptures? Several that I treasure include those revealing God's tender compassion and mercy. I like to be reminded of the Father's nature in this respect. Sometimes we picture God as being ready and waiting to mete out punishment. Perhaps our reasoning is based on our own attitudes toward those who have hurt or offended us. We often want the guilty party to pay or suffer for their wrongdoing — we don't want them to "get off the hook" without retribution.

As we ponder the brief eleven verses in this week's focal passage, may we realize anew our Father's longsuffering, merciful nature, and allow the Holy Spirit to enable us to forgive in like manner. This fourth chapter of Jonah gives us a glimpse into the heart



Maniscalco

of the God who wiped clean the slate of the inhabitants of Nineveh.

GOD'S CHARACTER (JONAH 4:1-4):

Jonah was infuriated when God showed mercy to the Ninevites. Notice Jonah's recounting his desire to flee to Tarshish. As he pouted, he admitted running from God because he knew the One who sent him on his mission was "a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love" (vs. 2). Jonah's bitter attitude revealed a callous heart, and he had quickly forgotten that he himself had just been a recipient of God's merciful rescue and restoration (2:10). We may think certain people don't deserve God's forgiveness, but in truth, no one is worthy of it (Isaiah 64:6). However, it is God's nature to quickly forgive any person

who will turn to Him in repentance.

PETTY CONCERN (JONAH 4:5-9):

Jonah "sat down at a place east of the city." Perhaps he hoped the destruction his message forewarned would still take place. As Jonah tried to provide shelter for himself, God prepared a shady vine (vs. 6), for which Jonah was very grateful. The next day, God sent a worm to teach Jonah an important lesson on priorities (vs. 7). We may say we want to serve Christ, but in reality, we don't want to be inconvenienced or uncomfortable. That is not the kind of discipline our Lord requires. "Then [Jesus] said to them all, If any man would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Setting aside one's own wants, comforts and priorities is not just for missionaries serving in foreign lands - notice the words "them all" in the preceding verse. For believers desiring to wholeheartedly serve the Lord Jesus, saying "no" to self is an impera-

tive. What "vines" do you need to cast aside?

DIVINE COMPASSION (JONAH 4:10-11):

Jonah was upset when the vine perished, but he couldn't care less about the fate of the 120,000 souls that populated Nineveh. By comparing the one-day-old vine to the spiritual blindness the Ninevites had endured, God forced Jonah to take a good look inside himself. Jonah was self-centered; God was (and always is) people-centered. The scope of His compassion is limitless and embraces all peoples.

God's plan for Jonah consisted of him being sent far from his hometown. However, we don't have to go to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) to touch the lives of internationals — they live among us! Think of the places you go on a weekly basis. Most likely, you encounter people of different ethnic backgrounds regularly. Revelation 5:9 reminds us that Jesus' blood "purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." He wants you to be a part of bringing the lost to him,

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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OCTOBER 1 - 31, 2003

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